

A SOVIET INTRODUCTION TO *DOÑA PERFECTA* (1964)

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INTRODUCTION

A lively discussion was stimulated at the *Primer Congreso Internacional Galdosiano* (Las Palmas, August 29 - September 5, 1973) by the presence of Romanian *congresistas*, several Slavic-language translations of Galdós' works on display. Doña Palmira Arnáiz Amigo's *ponencia* "Galdós en los países del centro y este de Europa," and my own "El interés soviético por los *Episodios* y novelas de Galdós (1935-1940)." Soon mention was made of a Soviet edition of *Doña Perfecta* known to be in Las Palmas (Moscow: Editorial "Enseñanza Superior," 1964; prologue in Russian by K. V. Tsurinov; text and commentaries in Spanish by M. L. González; and illustrations by L. M. Chernischev). It was also suggested that the introduction might be of interest to readers of *Anales Galdosianos*. Consequently, Rodolfo Cardona and I called on the eminent bibliographer Don Manuel Hernández Suárez who graciously received us and provided xerox copies of the introduction, as did *El Museo Canario* to whose library Don Manuel had donated the book.

I am also indebted to my former Russian teacher Professor Sam F. Anderson (University of Kansas) for much time and unlimited patience in helping me with this project. Without his many corrections, as well as innumerable suggestions concerning choice of words and shades of meaning, this translation would not have been possible.

The task of the translator is, of course, a complex one. My aim has been to remain as close to the original Russian as possible (even leaving spontaneous changes to the present tense for vividness), while making only those changes indispensable for a readable English-language text.

In spite of strong temptation, I have resisted all impulses to correct, interpret, and gloss the facts and ideas of the Russian commentator in order that the readers of *Anales Galdosianos* may have the clearest understanding possible of how Galdós is viewed by an official government commentator and, more importantly, how the Soviet youth of today is introduced to Don Benito.

BENITO PEREZ GALDOS AND HIS NOVEL *DOÑA PERFECTA*

K. V. Tsurinov

The author of the novel *Doña Perfecta*, Benito Pérez Galdós (1843-1920) is a most outstanding representative of critical realism in Spanish literature. His gigantic literary legacy, which was created in the course of nearly a half century of strenuous creative work, includes novels, short stories, sketches, critical articles, serious drama, and comedy. Among the seventy novels of Galdós, *Doña Perfecta* occupies a prominent place. As a novel on a contemporary theme, this work is a new page in the history of the Spanish realistic novel.

Galdós achieved the portrayal of the Spanish society of his time in the novel *Doña Perfecta* as a mature artist, with clearly defined *Weltanschauung* and method.

Galdós himself called *Doña Perfecta* "a novel of the first period." However, up to the time of its appearance, the writer not only had passed the elementary school of literary craftsmanship, but he had also become the creator of the most outstanding models of the historical novel in nineteenth-century Spanish literature. In this category would belong the *Episodios Nacionales*, so well known to the Soviet reader. Just as these historical novels do, *Doña Perfecta* also serves as convincing evidence of the high degree of democratism, to which the author rose in the understanding of social phenomena and the forces of artistic generalization, which he achieved in showing them.

I

The development of Spain in the nineteenth century was hindered by very powerful feudal remnants. Large-scale landownership of a feudal type made up a most important economic bulwark of Spanish reaction in the nineteenth century. The realization of the tasks of antifeudal revolution was the next stage on the road toward a democratic transformation of the country.

Defending the feudal privileges, deeply hostile to popular and national interests, Spanish absolutism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was powerless to stifle, even with the help of the Inquisition, the antifeudal protest of those at the bottom. Toward the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the depths of Spanish society, there were formed considerable explosive forces, which had been awaiting outlet in the form of antifeudal revolution. But the weak Spanish bourgeoisie did not make use of it; and, working in isolation from the populus, it got itself locked into a struggle between secluded court groups.

The revolutionary energy which had been stored up in the populus broke through after the beginning of the French armed intervention, which was prepared by the treachery of the Spanish nobility. The events of the years 1808-1814 were for Spain not only a just war of liberation, but also a revolution. In

spite of the most powerful religious and monarchical prejudices, the masses succeeded in developing along the separate stages of their struggle "the most resolute tendencies toward socio-political reforms."¹ The resistance of the popular masses doomed to failure the numerous attempts of the Napoleonic armies to enslave Spain; but the masses themselves, having been constituted in the main out of the peasantry and also from artisans, were incapable, because of their own class nature, of extirpating the deep economic roots of Spanish feudalism. Having found itself faced with a revolutionary rise of the broad segments of the people, the Spanish bourgeoisie was unable — and even then a considerable part of it was unwilling — to lead them to an assault on feudalism.

Not the bourgeoisie, but the popular masses themselves once again created the preconditions for a radical solution of the antifeudal problems at the time of the Spanish second revolution of 1820-1823. The masses spontaneously supported the uprising of Riego, and they delayed for almost three years the defeat of the revolution. Having headed it up during this time, the bourgeoisie did not satisfy the vital needs of the populus; and, because of this, their revolutionary energy was weakened. As in the years 1808-1814 also, the bourgeoisie seized that economic base on which the international counterrevolution was able to reestablish the absolutist regime.

The concessions which the absolutist regime made ultimately to the bourgeoisie did not remove from the popular masses the basic heaviness of feudal landowner exploitation. The growth of capitalism aggravated it by a new capitalistic industrial growth. In the middle of the year 1835, in Catalonia, there occurred a spontaneous manifestation of the workers, who were demanding the improvement of their material situation and the cessation of police repression. In the year 1839, there arose in Barcelona the first labor union in the history of Spain: "The Union of the Cotton Industry Workers."

Frightened by the very first manifestations of Spanish workers, and impressed by the 1830 revolution in France, the Spanish bourgeoisie still more resolutely than in the preceeding years restricted the sweep of its struggle against feudalism; it strove not to attract wide strata of the populus into participation in it. This struggle acquired an ever more clearly expressed dynastic and warlike character. The bourgeoisie acquired a concession from absolutism in exchange for a demonstration of support for the Regent Christina against the pretender to the throne, Don Carlos, the brother of Ferdinand VII. The army, which up to this time "no longer served the national cause but had turned itself into an instrument of the rivalry of ambitious generals, who had striven to install its guardianship over the court,"² became a decisive factor in the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the nobility. Notwithstanding all its hatred for the absolutist regime, wide strata of the populus did not show a desire to support the bourgeoisie in the third Spanish revolution of 1834-1843, which did not promise satisfaction of their vital interests.

The penetration of foreign capital strengthened the social contradictions of Spanish society. Already since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Spain was the object of French, and soon, under the flag of allied help by the army of Wellington, also English armed expansion. From the second half of the 40's, clear armed intervention and military-political pressure were supplemented by the economic enslavement of a semifeudal Spain, by the capitalistic powers En-

gland and France who had control over important natural resources of Spain. There began an absorption of the important landowners into the capitalistic sphere. They established contact with foreign banks, which had invested capital in the construction of the railroads, and they utilized the sale of parcels of land for financial deals. The heavy load of taxes increased sharply; "financial decrees of the government everywhere progressively transformed the tax collector into a propagandist of revolution."³

The development of capitalistic relations prepared the emergence of the Spanish working class onto the arena of political struggle in the fourth Spanish revolution of the years 1854-1856, [a revolution] which from the very beginning, opened a new stage in the history of the revolutionary movement in Spain. The leaders of the armed mutiny, with which the revolution began, were forced at this time, out of tactical considerations, to promulgate a manifesto. In it were promised isolated democratic transformations. Only after this was the revolt supported by an armed uprising in those cities which were most developed economically. The financial bourgeoisie who had inspired an armed revolt could not support a revolution at the stage it needed. Provisional power passed from it to the government, which had been representing the interests of the liberal bourgeoisie. It looked after its own immediate task in the limited scope of the revolution through which it untied hands for the return of the aristocracy, the military, and the clergy.

In the revolution of 1854-1856, Spanish workers manifested the bravery and steadfastness inherent in them as well as in the revolutionary class itself. The labor movement continued to break up under the crossfire of revolutionary governmental immaturity⁴ and feudal-absolutist counterrevolution. In the summer of the year 1855, in Barcelona, there occurred the first general strike in the history of Spain. The government cruelly suppressed it. The leader of the weavers, José Barceló, was executed by means of the *garrote*. When the feudal-absolutist reaction returned to power at the beginning of July, 1856, the workers came out with weapons in hand. Marx emphasizes the political significance of the military capacities which were manifested badly by the armed and untrained workers of Madrid in the clash with regular government troops.

The signal for this uprising was given through the *Cortes* by the liberal bourgeoisie, who had been deprived in consequence of the restoration of the previous regime of even those modest revolutionary gains which it attempted to preserve for itself. That the militia organized by the liberal bourgeoisie would betray the workers at the very beginning of the battle was sufficient evidence of the emergence of labor. "The liberal bourgeoisie was a hundred times more afraid of the independence of this class than of any sort of reaction whatsoever."⁵ In Spain rebelling labor still did not come out at this time with independent political demands, but only responded to the appeal of the *Cortes* for a constitutional monarchy. Nevertheless, "frightened by consequences of unionism, [and yet] tied to it in such a way against its will, the bourgeoisie again retreated under the protection of the cannons of hated despotism."⁶

Having betrayed the workers, the bourgeoisie openly defected into the protection of the shameless monarchical reaction, after which the revolution "completely dissipated its dynastic character."⁷ Then the reactionary role of the army indeed was revealed. It had been converted, in the hands of the ruling classes,

into an instrument for the repression of the populus: the army was wholly against the people. . . . This means that the end of the revolutionary mission of the Spanish army had set in."⁸ As a consequence, "the Spanish revolution had expended not only its dynastic but also its own warlike character."⁹

The revolution of 1854-1856 prepared the fifth Spanish revolution of 1868-1874. "The very next European revolution will find Spain ripe for compatible activities with it. The years 1854 and 1856 were transitional phases through which Spain had to pass in order to reach this maturity."¹⁰

II

The *Weltanschauung* and creative method of Galdós were formed in a circumstance of a sharp aggravation of social contradictions and a delineation of class forces in a period directly preceding the fifth Spanish revolution and in the first years of it as well.

Benito Pérez Galdós was born May 10, 1843, in the city of Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. His father was Sebastián Pérez of peasant origin who took part with the rank of second lieutenant in the War of Independence, upon the conclusion of which he received a small allotment of land. His mother, Dolores Galdós, was the daughter of a representative of the impoverished Spanish aristocracy. At the time of Benito's birth, his parents had a small but steady income. Its source was income from land and shares in a fishing enterprise. The only bright spot in the monotonous life of the provincial bourgeois was to reminisce about the liberational war against Napoleon. They began to inculcate Galdós with a love for the heroic past of his fatherland. In Las Palmas, Galdós receives his secondary education. In the year 1862, he travels to Madrid where he enters the Law School of the University.

The capital greeted Galdós with a picture of corruption: the court of Isabel II, the governmental apparatus, the terror of the ruling clique, and the growing dissatisfaction of its policy. Galdós was struck by the vivid social contrasts of the capital, by the political hubbub of the Madrid cafés, and by the ardent polemics in literary circles. A growing consciousness of the hypocrisy of justice under the existing regime could not inspire Galdós to a zeal for a legal career. He entered social-political activity in the left wing of the constitutional monarchy's opposition. Starting in the year 1865, Galdós regularly published political articles, reviews concerning literary and artistic matters, and sketches in the newspaper *La Nación*. In April of that same year, Galdós took part directly in the antigovernmental student manifestations. Many years later Galdós wrote concerning the events of this time: "They made on me an unforgettable impression and seriously influenced my literary activity."

In the circumstance of an approaching revolutionary situation, Galdós seeks new paths of artistic depiction of reality. He turns now to dramaturgy. But the plays written by him in the years 1865-1866 did not see the boards. Recalling with a smile his own youthful daring, Galdós wrote, "Breathing the pre-storm air of that tumultuous time, I had the conceited opinion that my dramatic experiments would produce a second, a completely decisive, revolution in literature."

The failure of his dramatic pursuit did not shake the resolve of Galdós to dedicate himself to literature. In sketches of contemporary society, part of which were published under the title *Galería de figuras de cera*, Galdós revealed a searching keenness of observation and a taste for the burning problems of the day. In many ways newspaper activity prepared Galdós for the novelistic genre.

The peculiarities of the historical evolution of Spain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries hindered the development of the realistic traditions of the Renaissance epoch in the Spanish novel. The first attempts to create the realistic novel in the nineteenth century date from the end of the 1840's and the beginning of the 1850's. Commencing with the early youthful experiment, *Un viage* [sic] *redondo por el Bachiller Sansón Carrasco*, written in imitation of Cervantes' satire, Galdós continually turned to the national classical legacy. In his newspaper writings, he established a bond with the progressive national tradition in nineteenth-century literature. Galdós strove in a limited way to unite the sharpness of the ideational direction of revolutionary-novelistic newspaper writings of Larra and the elements of the critical realism of Mesonero Romanos' *Escenas matritenses*. Having become sharply aware of the significance of social displacements, which originated in Spain after the revolution of 1854-1856, Galdós saw that his predecessors in the Spanish literature of the nineteenth century still had not utilized the possibilities of the social novel.

Galdós' perception of Spanish reality permitted him to gain for his own national literature an understanding of the significance of the experiments of the masters of critical realism in the Russian, French, and English literatures of the nineteenth century. The beginning of Galdós' acquaintance with Russian literature dates, apparently, from the 1860's. In the 1880's, he became one of the most informed people in Spain regarding the contemporary Russian novel. The testimony of Galdós' contemporaries confirms this, as does his correspondence with Turgenev. Moreover the influence which *Anna Karenina* showed on the Spanish writer is reflected in the novel *Realidad*.

The novels of Balzac and Dickens, which he could read in the original, occupied an important place in Galdós' study of world classical literary heritage. The *Pickwick Papers* were for the first time translated into Spanish by him and published in *La Nación*.

In the fall of 1867 Galdós began to write his first historical novel, *La Fontana de Oro*, which he devoted to the events in Spain during the period of the revolution of 1820-1823. By turning to this theme in the last year of the ignominious government of Isabel II, our author reflected the growing dissatisfaction with her policies among the people.

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At the time of the fifth Spanish revolution of 1868-1874, the political radicalism of Galdós was strengthened; the craftsmanship of expression of social protest in his creativity intensified. Galdós resolutely strove toward a democratic restructuring of society. From the very beginning of his literary activity, he wanted to see social phenomena through the eyes of the people. Little by little Galdós came to the consciousness of the deeply-rooted "against-the-people-character" of the entire system of social relationships in the absolutist regime. The

principal feature of the revolution of 1868-1874 was the emergence therein of the proletariat as an independent political force. In the period between the fourth and fifth revolutions in Spain, the pace of capitalistic development noticeably quickened. The numerical growth of the proletariat was accompanied by an enlargement of its political activity. In 1865 there was constituted in Barcelona a Congress of Catalanian Workers, the first in Spanish history. In 1868 in Madrid and Barcelona there was created the Spanish section of the First International, whose membership reached 40,000 persons after two years. Thus the labor movement determined the direction in which events developed from the very beginning of the revolution.

A general uprising, which spread spontaneously through the entire country, tore down the attempt of the liberal bourgeoisie to accomplish a superficial transformation with the help of the armed insurrection of September 18, 1868. The people's revolutionary movement smashed the absolutist regime so hateful to it. On September 30, Isabel hurriedly left Spain. Galdós enthusiastically perceived the emergence of the popular masses. Subsequently Galdós wrote, "While I was in Barcelona, the revolution of '68 broke out, which I greeted with enthusiasm."

The liberal bourgeoisie seized power and concentrated its effort toward binding the people to the monarchical system. The revolutionary pressure of the masses caused it to maneuver about and mask its intentions by means of a demagogic appeal for "a popular monarchy." Quickly Galdós is convinced that the liberal-bourgeois leaders are not helping with changing the social system. To replace the premature confidence of Galdós in the success of the revolution, there comes confusion: "In the course of some time I was experiencing the feeling of perplexity; not knowing which direction I should take; I was disappointed and depressed." But he drew strength from the people for overcoming the vacillations which had arisen in him.

At the end of the year 1869, Galdós finished *La Fontana de Oro*. Reflecting the antimonarchical sentiment of wide strata of the people, our writer recreated the loathsome images of absolutist-clerical Spain. Galdós condemns the bourgeois governorship of the party of the "*moderados*," which allowed the supporters of absolute monarchy the possibility of preparing for revenge. Galdós showed the narrow-mindedness and the inconsequential nature of the activities of the left wing of the bourgeois government party, the "*exaltados*." However, he was not able at that time to note that the basic source of the weakness of the "*exaltados*" was their isolation from the people.

Upon publishing *La Fontana de Oro*, Galdós came into collision with the obstacles with which conforming society meets the artist. While turning to a private publisher, the budding novelist could count on only an insignificant edition being circulated within a narrow circle of literary critics and in the "elite" parts of society. From this path our author pulled back. Fortuitous material support permitted Galdós himself to become the publisher of this novel. Galdós brought out his subsequent novels in the periodical press, publishing them on his own.

In the year 1870 *La Fontana de Oro* came out. The success of Galdós' first historical novel is explained in large part by the indissoluble connection estab-

lished therein between events of the past and contemporary questions upsetting the progressive Spanish community.

In the process of preparatory work on materials for subsequent historical novels, Galdós came out with a literary program, called by him "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España." This article, like the historical novel *El audaz* finished also in 1872, was published in the magazine *Revista de España*, on which Galdós actively collaborated for several years. Galdós resolutely rejected the declaration of the reactionary critics concerning the fact that in Spanish society supposedly were absent the preconditions for a nationally distinctive realistic novel; and he noted that its appearance, prepared by all the preceeding development in Spanish literature, must manifest itself as an answer to the urgent needs of the period.

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The ultimate course of events of the fifth Spanish revolution deepened Galdós' understanding of the processes which had taken place in Spanish society, a thing which played out a decisive role in the forming of his realistic craftsmanship. The liberal bourgeoisie, having betrayed the national interests, in essence, transferred the question concerning the successor of Isabel to Napoleon III and to Bismarck. To the members of the *Cortes* was left only the stamping of the decision concerning the elevation of Amadeo de Saboya to the throne. But the efforts of international reaction and the new monarchical powers could not stop the revolution. For the first time the exigency of the Republic, which had stemmed from the working masses, violated the monopoly of the bourgeoisie and the nobility in the question of the political structure of the country: "It strove everywhere to participate in events in order to utilize a convenient occasion for action, not presenting as yet a free field for action and for foreign intrigues by the propertied classes."¹¹ Galdós became sharply aware that the monarchy of Amadeo, in comparison with the regime of Isabel, did not bring essential changes. The unremitting striving of the masses toward social restructuring inspired our writer to the belief that international and internal reaction could not undermine their revolutionary energy.

By means of strenuous work on a multivolume panorama of nineteenth-century Spanish society, named by him *Episodios Nacionales*, Galdós participated in the struggle of the popular masses for a democratic transformation of the country. The appearance in Spanish society of the working class as an independent force evoked heightened interest for national history. Galdós strove to reinterpret an event of the past and recreate from democratic positions the historic truth, which the ideologists of the governing classes were distorting. For this he resolved to trace consecutively in a series of historical novels how the antagonism between the ruling clique and the people grew from the sources of contemporary history, and how, in spite of absolutist terror, democratic forces were strengthened. The shift from periods of black reactionary debauchery to years of stormy revolutionary enthusiasm made a justification for the cyclical attitude of mind in the *Episodios Nacionales*. Galdós utilized not only the same topic in every one of the novels of each cycle, but also the historical relation between the events, which are depicted in the same cycle. In the fortunes of fictional char-

acters, who are endowed with traits characteristic for the classes of Spanish society, events of great historical magnitude are interpreted.

Even the struggle of the Spanish populus in the period of the Napoleonic invasion, which is the theme of the first cycle of the *Episodios Nacionales* and its concrete incarnation in the novels which subsequently had been prepared for the press were dictated to Galdós by the events which were unfolding in Spain in the years 1873-1874. Under the pressure of the popular masses, Amadeo de Saboya cowardly fled from Spain; and on February 12, 1873, the *Cortes* proclaimed a republic. The Spanish working class was supposed to play a principal role in determining the character of the new regime. "The task consisted of expediting for the proletariat the passing of the preliminary stages, which were preparing the socialist revolution in order to remove the obstacles standing in its path." ¹²

In his historical novels Galdós responded with journalistic up-to-dateness to the revolutionary events taking place. Therefore, the publishing of his novels became impossible in the periodical press.

In the novels *Trafalgar* and *La Corte de Carlos IV*, with which the first series of the *Episodios Nacionales* begins, Galdós depicted the crisis of the absolutist leaders at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, the deepening exposure in them of the antagonism between the people and the ruling clique stirred the *petit bourgeois* illusions which had come over our author. [These illusions were] evoked also by the fact of the proclamation of the Republic. Galdós reappraised the political radicalism of the bourgeois republicans who had come to power. Quickly Galdós established himself as a witness of the open terror of republican powers against the workers who were demanding democratic transformations. In this period he writes the novels *El 19 de marzo y el 2 de mayo* and *Bailén*, in which the popular masses move out onto the proscenium of history.

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In the course of subsequent events, Galdós reached the culminating point in his creativity as a historical novelist. Spanish workers took "an active part . . . in the struggle for the republic" ¹³ and repeatedly created the preconditions for its victory. But the working class could attain this goal only after it had become a hegemonic power in the revolution. In Spain at that time there was not any authentically revolutionary party under the guidance of which it would begin to blaze a trail toward its own full liberation. "The Spanish working class could not enjoy this possibility but only take an active part in the revolution. The influence of the Bakunists impeded such participation." ¹⁴ The Bakunian schismatics of the international labor movement, by means of their treacherous actions in the Spanish revolution, unmasked themselves as secret agents of the bourgeoisie, which had obtained political power for it [the Spanish revolution]. But the Bakunians showed themselves impotent to prevent the activities of the working class. And in Spanish events, the working class revealed itself a very staunch and resolute champion on behalf of democracy. Indeed the Spanish bourgeoisie, according to the example of their French confreres, betrayed as a class the cause of democracy and the national interests. The bourgeoisie cleared a path to gov-

ernment power for the large landowners who were standing behind the military clique. After violence upon the workers, General Pavía accomplished an armed coup on January 2, 1874, dissolved the *Cortes*, and established a military dictatorship.

In the novels written after this, *Juan Martín, el empecinado*, *Zaragoza*, *Gerona*, and *Cádiz*, Galdós showed how the threat to the vital interests of the nation in 1808-1814 exposed the deep abyss between the ruling classes and the basic part of society. With great accusatory force, our writer depicts the treachery of the aristocracy, who either openly went over to the side of the enemy or caused a no-less serious damage to the nation in the ranks of the national party. Feudal-landowner reaction concentrated its strength not on the struggle with the foreign invaders, but on a fierce defense of the medieval social structure. Deepening the social differentiation under the influence of contemporary events, Galdós resolutely condemned the self-seeking interests of the bourgeoisie who betray the popular cause.

Galdós comes to the definite conclusion that the liberation of Spain from feudal bonds and the national independence can be attained only by a struggle of the popular masses. Our writer spontaneously reflected in the best of the *Episodios Nacionales* the revolutionary activity of the Spanish proletariat. So, therefore, history became now for Galdós a means of interpreting current affairs, not only in their present-day aspect, but also in the perspective of social development. In the years when Spanish reaction openly betrayed the national interests, Galdós expressed the inexorable truth that the populus was defending the independence of its own country. Our author inserted this lofty patriotic truth into the demonstration of "the genuinely popular war," as he himself called it, in the image of Zaragoza shrouded in smoke, destroyed, but not having surrendered itself to the enemy. In the years when internal and international reaction were annihilating the last traces of the republican system in Spain, the consciousness of the inexhaustable energy of the people inspired our writer with optimistic faith in the inevitability of an ultimate creation of a democracy.

The image modeled by Galdós of *Juan Martín, el empecinado*, the semilit-erate peasant, who stood as a wise partisan leader, serves to this date as a living incarnation of the forces inherent within the populus.

The optimism of the democrat determined the success of the writer-realist. Small pocket-size books in covers with the colors of the national flag were enthusiastically received in democratic circles. In the years of the Restoration, Galdós continued the *Episodios Nacionales*. For them he wrote the key novels of the first series and the second series (likewise consisting of ten novels) which embraces events in Spain from 1814 through 1834.

III

The indissoluble bond with his own time allowed Galdós to use widely and fruitfully the experiment of the historical novelist while turning to contemporary themes in the novel *Doña Perfecta*. Consciously preserving in himself the role of the historian of Spanish society, Galdós, as if in passing, mentions "the notes from which this true narrative was extracted." He thoroughly investigates the

roots of contemporary social phenomena which have built their nests in the past. As in the *Episodios Nacionales*, our writer does not withdraw into the past, does not transform himself into a chronicler who impassively states facts; but he remains as a champion for the democratic restructuring of society.

The fifth and last Spanish revolution in the nineteenth century did not accomplish basic bourgeois-democratic transformations. The governments of England and France helped the Spanish counterrevolution return the Bourbons to the throne. The annihilation of the Republic was completed in January, 1875, by proclaiming as king of Spain the son of Isabel, Alfonso XII. The Pope sent him his blessing. Lively fears concerning the labor movement forced the bourgeoisie not only to make use of feudal-landlord reaction in the capacity of counterrevolutionary shock forces, but also to agree provisionally to the role of the junior partner — the large landowners — in the sharing of governmental powers. The Church and the Army remained the most important support of the monarchy as before the Restoration.

Galdós set about the creation of the novel *Doña Perfecta* in February, 1876. In March he started to publish completed chapters in the magazine *Revista de España*. By May of the very same year, the novel was finished and quickly came out as a complete single edition. Our writer hastened to take up the urgent topics of the day and went along in the burning footsteps of events.

For almost a year and a half the Restoration resembled the worst times of absolutism. Dictatorial power was concentrated in the hands of Cánovas del Castillo, the protégé of the important landowners. In *Historia de la decadencia de España*, written under the impressions received in the revolution of 1854-1856, he openly deplored that the Spanish monarchs were not in a position fully to inherit in the nineteenth century the medieval traditions of the Hapsburgs. Now Cánovas proclaimed the reestablishment of the monarchy and strove, as far as possible, but with obliged calculation of the possibilities, to follow their program. Terror raged. The concordat with the Vatican, concluded in 1851, was reinstated. The Church received unlimited rights of control over education, and to it was granted the opportunity to intervene in other governmental matters. In order to assure the stability of the monarchy, the authorities matched ruthless repression against the people with a political unity around the throne of heterogeneous political groupings who represented the interests of the ruling classes. This did not require much effort; the fear of a revolution forced even the leaders of the bourgeois republicans to find a common language with the aristocracy and the higher clergy.

The supporters of Charles VII made up a famous exception. In 1872 the international counterrevolutionary and monarchists of all shades began in Spain an armed struggle against the republicans; and, therefore, for the second time in the nineteenth century, they galvanized the carcass of Carlism.¹⁵ After 1874 the Carlist leaders, encouraged by the debauchery of official authorities, asked for the restoration of feudal institutions, even to the point of an Inquisition. To this even Cánovas could not bring himself. Having concentrated effort on the repression of the people, the government strove to attract the Carlists to their own side. In the course of the undertaking of armed expeditions against them in the spring of 1876, amnesty was twice offered. The principal cause of the disintegration of the Carlist movement consisted not in this demonstration of armed

force, but in the utter failure of the attempts of its leaders to find any kind of support among the peasants of even the most backward regions of the country.

Toward the end of 1875, Cánovas formed a coalition of supporters of the restored monarchy. The principal political support of the throne was the Conservative Party of important landowners headed up by him and the financial bourgeoisie connected with the former. The governmental rulers set up a pseudo-democratic cover in order to create the outward show of constitutional liberties. An agreement with the trading and business bourgeoisie, who had entered into the Liberal Party, favored this. There was given at that time a commitment by the liberals not to lay claim to a majority of the seats in the *Cortes*, and the electoral machine decided beforehand the results of the balloting. The *Cortes Constituyentes*, whose job it was to proclaim broad and wide the constitutional guarantees under the new monarchy, met in March, 1876. The grandiose eloquence, by which the bourgeois deputies of the 1812 *Cortes* of Cádiz had veiled their impotence and fear of genuine revolutionary activity, poured out now into cynical glorification of bourgeois "liberties," liberties which were placed at the service of the political violence of the unbridled militarists, the feudal tyranny of the landowners, and the inquisitional intolerance of the Catholic Church.

In the novel *Doña Perfecta*, Galdós ruthlessly tears away from the despotic Restoration regime the hypocritical coverings which the bourgeoisie had created. With undisguised sarcasm our writer speaks of the complaisant condescending manner of the undemanding century, which contrived all possible veils out of words and deeds in order to hide what might seem not quite pleasant to the unsophisticated eye. Misleading the vigilant censor, Galdós breaks off the dating of events in the novel at exactly the year 1870 [sic]. However, the lively pictures of contemporary times permit, from the very first pages, the establishing of the fact that the action unfolds in the post-revolutionary period. Galdós is an impassioned exposé of the ruling clique under the Restoration regime. In this there is a resolute ideological basis for the realistic mastery manifested by him in the novel.

The portrayal of reality, which reveals a severe and unattractive truth, withstands the false idyllic illustration of the patriarchal dispositions of provincial Spain in the creative work of apologists for feudal-landowner reaction in literature. For example, Antonio de Trueba revealingly called his very first experiment in prose *Cuentos populares color de rosa*.

With a deep understanding of the arrangement of the reactionary forces, Galdós made the scene of action of the novel in the out-of-the-way, God-forsaken little town of Orbajosa, having dominion over the desolate plain, with the railroad stretching out over long — uncultivated fields. In the portrayal of this citadel of feudal-landlord reaction, our writer united into an integral artistic image the greatest character traits which denoted higher Spanish society, including that of the capital. The author states that all the names encountered in the novel do not exist in reality; and indeed, at that very point, even sarcastically adds, "Orbajosa . . . is found not too near and not too far from Madrid; . . . its glorious strongholds can be found everywhere, no matter where Spaniards may look."

Indeed Galdós gives an exceptionally keen and truthful portrayal of the ruling clique in his gallery of episodic characters. The arrogant nobleman who had advantageously placed his own property for gain, and the merchant who had grown

fat by fixing the price for people depending on the content of their purses, *señoritos* bored from idleness and overambitious careerists lusting for judgeships, untiringly garrulous politicians (who have even become silent in mute lethargy if the conversation does not turn on religion), and the Dean of the Cathedral — such he presents as the vital “best part” of Orbajosan society. Each representative of it is provided with individual as well as with character traits for the whole class. For all the differences of personal self-interests, the spirit of self-seeking motives (money-grubbing, presumptuous notions of their own superiority, and a brutish hatred for freedom and progress) unites them all.

These qualities attained a concentrated incarnation in several characters who hold in their hands uncontrolled economic, political, and ideological power over the local inhabitants. All threads of government are united in the secret sovereign of Orbajosa, Doña Perfecta. The situation of the very rich landowners allows her to hold all the region in dependence. In her personal way of subordinating lies the ramification of the apparatus of coercion. Invested with police power the *cacique Caballuco*, slavishly committed to Doña Perfecta, terrorizes the inhabitants of Orbajosa. Inocencio, the sinister and greedy cleric “sufficiently experienced in hiding his feelings,” fabricates perfidious intrigue, striving to turn the neighboring peasants into submissive fulfillment of the will of Doña Perfecta. Finally Cayetano, digging out fragments of past feudal might, scribbles pseudo-scientific substantiation for the schemes of Doña Perfecta to restore society to those times when throughout all of Spain there smoked the flames of the bonfires of the Inquisition upon which heretics were roasted.

These uncrowned rulers of Orbajosa strive to impart to the people “distrust, prejudice, and hatred toward the entire family of mankind.” Having given to Orbajosa the traits of poverty-ridden Spain so familiar to him, Galdós observes with bitterness: “This town by no means belongs in Chaldean nor Coptic, but rather in Spanish geography.”

By the fact of her existence, Doña Perfecta and her retinue serve as visual evidence of the stagnation of the Spanish social structure. Galdós underscores this by means of their depiction: by her habits and form of life, Doña Perfecta, created some kind of a crust, an palpable shell into which she closes herself; the face of Inocencio “shrinks into some kind of black, dust-covered clod, awkward, absurd, strangely elongated.” What indeed supports and gives life to these gloomy medieval symbols who continue to rule in contemporary society? In the moment which is critical for Doña Perfecta, the zeal of the bourgeois lawyers and compliance of principal creditors strengthen her position in society — and “a majority of those who had been threatening her with danger were charmed out of it.”

Our writer unmask the entire social system, which had put the stamp of legality upon the gross repression of the populus, and points at feudal-clerical reaction as a most important support of the government. The local administration protects the bandit *Caballuco* and its subjugated *guardia civil*, which, as even does this protégé of Doña Perfecta, also carries out final sentences on the spot without law court and inquest. In these conditions the notions and influences of Doña Perfecta in the ruling spheres have their effects, as do favorable comments in Madrid upon the glorification by Don Cayetano of the brig-

andage of the Conquistadores, the predatory wars of Charles I, and the persecution by Phillip II of those holding different views.

The provocative speeches of Doña Perfecta and her retinue concerning the tyrannical policy of the government is the traditional mode of the Carlists, who strove to utilize for their own interests the discontent of the peasants against the central government. News received in Madrid, about the uprising which is being prepared, leaves its instigators unpunished and gives the government the pretext for reprisal upon the inhabitants. The collision between the regular forces of General Batalla and the gang of *Caballuco* is not more than an episode, not violating the basic interests of both sides. Not without reason, at the height of the exchange of fire, Cayetano expresses confidence in the swift promotion of *Caballuco* to general, "from which both he and the army will benefit much." The arrival of government forces thickens the already asphyxiating atmosphere of Orbajosa, in which reigns stupid and bigoted force, hating all that which is alive and free.

The development of the subject confirms the accusatory trend of the novel by means of the indispensability of the struggle against reaction, which had legalized its tyranny. The reader learns from his antecedent history about the positive inclinations of the novel's hero, the young engineer Pepe Rey. Pepe Rey characterizes the striving to employ fruitfully one's own powers and to express freely thoughts and feelings. A short independent life in Madrid and abroad seriously blasted his faith in the fairness of the social order to which capitalistic development leads. This graphically confirms his characteristic observation concerning latter-day idols of the bourgeoisie Krupp, the cannon king and Thiers, the oppressor of freedom. Such is the starting point of the evolution of the protagonist.

In the provincial backwoods Pepe Rey finds himself saved from "the falsity and comedy which they call higher society." With all the logic of the expanding events, our author subsequently destroys, as deeply erroneous, the hope of the hero to find Virgilian peace in society. This naive hope had led Pepe to Orbajosa. The very first collision with reality shows an isolating effect on him; instead of general prosperity, he sees poverty and decadence. His critical remarks evoked by this spectacle harden Doña Perfecta.

Galdós follows the progressive tradition in national literature and juxtaposes the relationship between Pepe and Rosario with the rigidly obsolescent morality of the nobility and clergy.

In the detestable environment of Doña Perfecta, the continually positive content of the image of Rosario is revealed. Savage religious prejudices did not stifle in her the healthy protesting base, which comes out in defense of feeling toward Pepe Rey. Seven scenes, in which Rosario for the first time in her life expresses insubordination to her mother, acquire social meaning; and while her protest suffers from the melodramatic, it does not detract completely, in spite of the form it takes. The love of Pepe Rey for Rosario strengthens the conflict between them and the "higher society" of Orbajosa. This conflict remains in the last analysis the mainspring of the action in the novel.

In the collisions of Pepe Rey with the rulers of Orbajosa, our writer was able not only to show "passions clashing in open or secret struggle," but also "to open the mysterious sources where these stormy speeches have their begin-

ning." In the eyes of Doña Perfecta and her retinue, even the quite moderate laws, upon which the young intellect who has appeared in their lands bases his claims, make Pepe a dangerous disturber of the despotic customs of Orbajosa. In the suffocating atmosphere of Orbajosa's society, our author perceives the life-giving source of genuine humanity. It is shown with great affection in the depictions of honest toilers, "the condemned of society," the Troya sisters, for whom the words "today one does not work" are the same as "tomorrow one does not eat." The contact with them helped Pepe Rey destroy the wall of religious intolerance, with which his adversaries endeavored to encircle Rosario. After this, their deeply-rooted violence, insidious intrigues, and religious fanaticism could not stifle the love which united the protagonists of the novel. Even up to their tragic downfall, as in the case of one of the principal culprits, Inocencio, the confession bursts forth, "We did everything in our power. . . . It is impossible for anyone to do more. We have suffered destruction."

Pepe Rey came to the realization of the need of defying the suppressive laws. In the first open clash with Doña Perfecta, he found in her not only an opponent to his marriage with Rosario, but also "a cruel, senseless, revolting force" which lays obstacles to social progress. However, protesting against these established forces of the regime, Pepe is revealed as an anarchist fighting alone. His weakness shows itself especially clear from that moment when he begins to understand the necessity to act. His experienced and wily opponents turn his unceasing vacillations and unforgivable magnanimity against him. By a remark placed in the mouth of the novel's hero — "I need powerful friends, with initiative, with great experience in the disentangling of complicated circumstances, with great resourcefulness and resoluteness," — Galdós set off his most decisive inadequacy; and, together with this, he did express a proper irreconcilability in his attitude toward reaction. Effectively struggling by means of his inspirational appeal for democratic laws against the feudal vestiges, our writer expresses the urgent interests of broad segments of the Spanish people. The government of political and ideological reaction is founded, as this is shown in the novel, upon pitiless exploitation of the peasants. They surrendered to Doña Perfecta "the fruits of their fields and pay rent while she heaps upon them cruel reproach because drought and barren soil have taken a toll — a natural phenomenon concerning which these poor people were absolutely innocent."

Galdós notes, within the course of historical development, definite progress taking place in the peasant consciousness. Taught by experience of the past, the peasants in the main do not get involved in the Carlist uprising. Justifiably aroused by the tyranny of government troops, the peasants however, at the same time, openly laugh in answer to the firebrand remarks of Inocencio. Such passive resistance still does not reveal the revolutionary peasantry. Not having perceived the active force of antifeudal peasant protest, Galdós came to a condensed representation of their ownership prejudice. The gardener Estebanillo, who aids Pepe Rey, is only mentioned. At the same time, from the general mass of the peasantry, our writer sets off Tío Licurgo, who had extracted a material gain from the badgering of Pepe Rey, organized by Doña Perfecta. In Licurgo are not shown those typical traits which, characterizing the peasant as a toiler, determine the decisive revolutionary aspect of peasant consciousness. The absence of genuine collectiveness in ideological content of form was reflected in his depiction. Li-

curgo is portrayed as "a dark mass, a bundle of gray broadcloth out of the midst of the pleats of which there peeped out the roughish face of the Castillian peasant, diefied by the sun."

A prominent national writer-democrat, Galdós played a significant role in the development of the Spanish literary language. Fighting for its purity, Galdós came out as an opponent of the language cluttered up by dialecticisms and provincialisms which were widespread among contemporary writers and those who had preceeded him in the nineteenth century. The language characteristic of the author is that of the provincial society in the novel *Doña Perfecta*, and the speech of the most active persons in the novel is free of these deficiencies, thus effecting clarity and expressiveness of narration. Galdós turned during the creation of his works to the treasure house of national popular speech. The source enriching the language of our author was classical Spanish literature, especially the works of Cervantes, as well as lively popular speech. This was reflected in the language of the novel. However, not having received vitally authentic social motivation, the image of Licurgo was manifested as a failure in all aspects, including speech characteristics. Unrevealed in the necessary degree, the individual methods could not compensate for the basic vital concept of the image. The result proved to be all the more a failure, in essence, of an incorrect attempt by Galdós to typify the image with the help of impoverished peasant language, interspersed with crude, facetious sayings and vulgarizations.

The very fact of the creation of the novel *Doña Perfecta* in the years when the bourgeoisie openly united with feudal-landholder reaction, in the name of the suppression of the people, testifies to the fact that the courageous summons of Galdós to the decisive struggle for democracy was inspired by the social protest of the exploited masses.

The basic dignity of the novel is defined in the fact that Galdós spontaneously reflected in it the progressive tendency of social development, of which the Spanish working class had become the most revolutionary vehicle of expression in the society contemporary to him. Thanks to this Galdós was able, in a situation of violence by feudal-landlord reaction, not only to show the internal weakness invested in the total plenitude of the power of the ruling clique, but also to express the certitude in the inevitability of the final destruction of its supremacy. Not by accident, our writer states that the villainous crime of the rulers of Orbajosa received wide publicity, that is in Barcelona. Although they pretend their despotic regime to be an expression of "the national character in all its purity," although they name their opponents "people suborned by foreign gold," they live in a panicky fear concerning the future, namely because they feel irresistible forces within Spain itself. Today these forces compel them in a cowardly way to pretend the killing of Pepe Rey is a suicide, but tomorrow these same forces will be able to smash their supremacy. "Our glorious Spain is ending, perishing, dying," says Cayetano, the zealous propagandist of medieval barbarity at the end of the book. Through the ideological-artistic trend of his novel, however, the writer-democrat Galdós showed that it is becoming stronger, that another Spain — the fatherland of the Spanish people — is preparing itself for a decisive battle.

The novel *Doña Perfecta* provoked stormy indignation in reactionary circles. Its reading was forbidden to student youth by the clergy. Critics close to the

ruling circles blamed Galdós for injury to social foundations. The effort of ideologists of the governmental classes to disseminate among readers a hostility toward Galdós, utilizing their religious prejudices, proved to be futile; the novel increased the popularity of its author. When Galdós again turned to the theater, one of the first of his productions was a play of the same name, *Doña Perfecta*, patterned on the novel. The première took place January 28, 1896, in one of the most important theaters of Madrid. In March of that very same year, Galdós stages the play *Doña Perfecta* with great success in a series of cities: Valencia, Barcelona, Oviedo, and Bilbao.

IV

By means of the novel *Doña Perfecta*, Galdós began the extensive portrayal of the Spanish society of his time. Our writer reflected social changes linked with the slow but steady development of capitalistic attitudes and the sharp penetration of foreign, especially English, capital into Spain which had grown sharply since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. A further aggravation of class contradictions was reflected above all in the growth of the labor movement, which at the end of the 70's enters a period of new ascent.

The ceaseless searchings for a way out of existing social conditions leads Galdós to the creation of heroes which he took from a labor environment. The poeticized image of the heroine of the novel *Marianela* (1879), a daughter of mine workers, contrasts with the world of the proprietors. Hostile to genuine humanity, the world of the mine owners becomes guilty of the death of *Marianela*. Emerging from a poor bureaucratic family, Isidora de [sic] Rufete in the novel *La desheredada* (1881) is portrayed as a sacrifice and as a result of the bourgeois-aristocratic milieu which disfigures the human being. She is led into this ambiance by a vicious striving to become an enjoyer of the full rights of the privileged part of society. Crippled morally and physically, Isidora perishes on the road of crimes and lewdness. The fate of her brother Mariano who, while still a juvenile experiences backbreaking work in a factory, is constituted differently. Mariano attempts to assassinate the king and they execute him on the gallows. The lack of understanding of the resolute revolutionary role of the proletariat does not permit our writer to show the struggle of the exploited masses in the society of his time. His heroes are solitary persons, incapable of rising to active protest. The force of Galdós' realism is in the unmasking of a social system dooming the popular masses to a ruthless exploitation, poverty, and ignorance. In the very same novel, *La desheredada*, the writer portrays with striking sarcasm the champions of the bourgeois "civilization" fighting for intensification of the police regime and the construction of new prisons.

An implacable opponent of feudal vestiges, Galdós more and more directly criticizes bourgeois reality. A change in the correlation of the forces of the bourgeoisie and the nobility in the course of the subsequent historical development promotes intensification of the anti-bourgeois line in the creative work of Galdós.

In the novel *El amigo Manso* (1882), Galdós creates the repugnant image of one of the leaders of capitalistic society, José Manso, who made millions on the Cuban plantations, and upon his arrival in Spain occupies himself with shady

financial and political affairs. Endowed with typical traits of his class, José Manso becomes one of the leaders of the party, "on the standard of which, democracy is represented in the form of reptiles," and he strives to implant in Spain the systems of the United States of America which make room for capitalistic beasts of prey.

Faithful to national interests, Galdós resolutely condemned the expansionist policy of the capitalistic powers, impudently playing the master in Spain. In connection with the creation in 1883 of the government of the liberals, the newspaper *The [London] Times* wrote, "Finally we have found that which we need. The government which now is ruling Spain is the most favorable for English interests of all the governments in Europe, including Portugal and Turkey." In 1883 Galdós visited England. In travel sketches published after returning to his native land, he characterized the leaders of the country seen by him as "defenders of the right of force, masters of pillage and violence."

The unbending belief of our author in the strength of the Spanish populus distinctly manifested itself in the circumstance of a crisis of the ruling circles which had worsened since the beginning of the twentieth century. Striving to show that this crisis was prepared by a prolonged decay of the governmental caste, Galdós recommenced work in 1898 on the *Episodios Nacionales*. By 1912, he creates twenty-six novels, which went into a third, fourth, and an unfinished fifth series, and led up to the portrayal of Spanish society before the time of the Bourbon restoration. In the semi-feudal backwardness of Spain, Galdós sees the cause of the collapse to which its leaders had led the country. In 1901 Galdós writes the play *Electra* which unmasks the dominance of the Catholic Church. *Electra* evoked violent political responses throughout all of Spain which religious processions, especially organized by the clergy on the days of the play's presentation, were not able to muffle.

Having begun his political activities in the 1860's in the Constitutional Monarchy Party, Galdós participated from the 90's onward in the struggle against the constitutional monarchy of Alfonso XIII in the left wing of the Republican opposition, which he represented in the *Cortes* in 1907 and 1910. The political radicalism of Galdós is corroborated under the influence of the instigation of massive strikes of workers, taking place in 1909, which had been evoked by the reinforced militarization of the country. Making common cause with the struggle of the workers, Galdós came out in print with a protest against the Moroccan armed venture undertaken by the Spanish ruling circles. In this period Galdós approached the socialist movement. In his novel *El caballero encantado* (June-December, 1909), he strove to show in symbolic form the mighty creative forces of the working people. In the decline of life in 1916, Galdós began to realize that genuine democracy can be reached only beyond the limits of proprietary society: "Socialism! There the ascent begins."

A convinced democrat, Galdós was throughout all his activities an irreconcilable opponent of all that is obsolete and reactionary. Therefore, he participates even today by means of his works in the struggle of the democratic forces against the bloody *franquista* regime and the supporters of its international imperialistic reaction.

NOTES

- 1 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1958), X, 448.
- 2 Marx and Engels, X, p. 344.
- 3 Marx and Engels, X, 322.
- 4 Marx and Engels, X, 483.
- 5 V. I. Lenin, *Works*, XVIII, 545.
- 6 Marx and Engels, XVIII, 43.
- 7 Marx and Engels, XII, 47.
- 8 Marx and Engels, XII, 49.
- 9 Marx and Engels, XII, 48.
- 10 Marx and Engels, XII, 49.
- 11 Marx and Engels, XVIII, 458.
- 12 Lenin, VIII, 359.
- 13 Lenin, VIII, 445.
- 14 Lenin, VIII, 359.
- 15 Marx and Engels, X, 374.

(Translation by Vernon A. Chamberlin, University of Kansas.)